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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet provides an overview of the historic role, accomplishments, and challenges which face historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) as they carry out their unique mission. It summarizes the efforts of the Department of Education aimed at strengthening HBCUs, while assuring that higher education programs do not discriminate on the basis of race. The pamphlet covers the background of HBCUs, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the early compliance activity in postsecondary education, White House initiatives on HBCUs, the Higher Education Act, and information to consider in selecting a black college or university. A list is also provided of the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights regional offices throughout the country. (GLR)

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HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES AND HIGHER EDUCATION DESEGREGATION

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HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AND HIGHER EDUCATION DESEGREGATION

U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights
Washington, D.C. 20202-1100

March 1991

INTRODUCTION

Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were established to serve the educational needs of black Americans. Prior to the time of their establishment, and for many years afterwards, blacks were generally denied admission to traditionally white institutions. As a result, HBCUs became the principal means for providing postsecondary education to black Americans.

Today, HBCUs must fulfill educational goals far beyond those initially set. President George Bush described the unique mission of black colleges as follows:

> *At a time when many schools barred their doors to black Americans, these colleges offered the best, and often the only, opportunity for a higher education. Today, thank heavens, most of those barriers have been brought down by the law, and yet historically black colleges and universities still represent a vital component of American higher education.*

This pamphlet provides an overview of the historic role, accomplishments, and challenges which face HBCUs as they carry out their unique mission. The information will allow the reader to consider HBCUs as a valid choice in meeting the educational needs of minority and non-minority students. Further, the pamphlet summarizes the efforts of the Department of Education aimed at strengthening HBCUs, while assuring that higher education programs do not discriminate on the basis of race.

*BACKGROUND OF HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

Prior to the Civil War, there was no structured higher education system for black students. Public policy and certain statutory provisions prohibited the education of blacks in various parts of the nation. The Institute for Colored Youth, the first higher education institution for blacks, was founded in Cheyney, Pennsylvania, in 1837. It was followed by two other black institutions--Lincoln University, in Pennsylvania (1854), and Wilberforce University, in Ohio (1856).

Although these institutions were called "universities" or "institutes" from their founding, a major part of their mission in the early years was to provide elementary and secondary schooling for students who had no previous education. It was not until the early 1900s that HBCUs began to offer courses and programs at the postsecondary level.

Following the Civil War, public support for higher education for black students was reflected in the enactment of the Second Morrill Act in 1890. The Act required states with racially segregated public higher education systems to provide a land-grant institution for black students whenever a land-grant institution was established and restricted for white students. After the passage of the Act, public

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**Information in this section is contained in the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, The Traditionally Black Institutions of Higher Education (1860 to 1982) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985).*

land-grant institutions specifically for blacks were established in each of the southern and border states. As a result, some new public black institutions were founded, and a number of formerly private black schools came under public control; eventually 16 black institutions were designated as land-grant colleges. These institutions offered courses in agricultural, mechanical, and industrial subjects, but few offered college-level courses and degrees.

The U.S. Supreme Court's 1896 decision in Plessy v. Ferguson established a "separate but equal" doctrine in public education. In validating racially dual public elementary and secondary school systems, Plessy also encouraged black colleges to focus on teacher training to provide a pool of instructors for segregated schools. At the same time, the expansion of black secondary schools reduced the need for black colleges to provide college preparatory instruction.

By 1953, more than 32,000 students were enrolled in such well known private black institutions as Fisk University, Hampton Institute, Howard University, Meharry Medical College, Morehouse College, Spelman College, and Tuskegee Institute, as well as a host of smaller black colleges located in southern and border states. In the same year, over 43,000 students were enrolled in public black colleges. HBCUs enrolled 3,200 students in graduate programs. These private and public institutions mutually served the important mission of providing education for teachers, ministers, lawyers, and doctors for the black population in a racially segregated society.

The addition of graduate programs, mostly at public HBCUs, reflected three Supreme Court decisions in which the "separate but equal" principle of Plessy was applied to graduate and professional education. The decisions stipulated: (1) a state must offer schooling for blacks as soon as it provided it for whites (Sipuel v. Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma, 1948); (2) black students must receive the same treatment as white students (McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents, 1950); and (3) a state must provide facilities of comparable quality for black and white students (Sweatt v. Painter, 1950). Black students increasingly were admitted into some traditionally white graduate and professional schools if their program of study was unavailable at HBCUs. In effect, desegregation in higher education began at the post-baccalaureate level.

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education rejected the "separate but equal" doctrine and held that racially segregated public schools deprive black children of equal protection guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. The Plessy decision, which had governed public education policy for more than a half-century, was overturned. Despite the landmark Supreme Court decision in Brown, most HBCUs remained segregated with poorer facilities and budgets compared with traditionally white institutions. Lack of adequate libraries and scientific and research equipment and capabilities placed a serious handicap on many HBCUs. Several of the public HBCUs closed or merged with traditionally white institutions. However, most black college students continued to attend HBCUs years after the Brown decision was rendered.

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

Ten years after the Brown decision, Congress enacted Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to provide a mechanism for ensuring equal opportunity in federally assisted programs and activities. In enacting Title VI, Congress also reflected its concern with the slow progress in desegregating educational institutions following the Supreme Court's Brown decision. Title VI protects individuals from discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance. Passage of the law led to the establishment of the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the former Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). OCR placed its primary compliance emphasis in the 1960s and early 1970s on eliminating unconstitutional elementary and secondary school segregation in the southern and border states.

EARLY COMPLIANCE ACTIVITY IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Nineteen states were operating racially segregated higher education systems at the time Title VI was enacted. In 1969-70, after intensive investigative work, OCR notified a number of the states that they were in violation of Title VI for having failed to dismantle their previously operated racial systems of higher education. OCR sought, without success, statewide higher education desegregation plans. In 1970, private plaintiffs filed suit against HEW for failing to initiate enforcement action against the systems under investigation by OCR. Their suit is known as the Adams case.

In 1977, as part of the Adams case, a court ordered the federal government to establish new, uniform criteria for statewide desegregation. In response, OCR published Criteria Specifying the Ingredients of Acceptable Plans to Desegregate State Systems of Public Higher Education (Criteria). The Criteria recognized the unique role of HBCUs in meeting the educational needs of black students. Accordingly, the Criteria called for the enhancement of HBCUs through improvements in physical plants and equipment, number and quality of faculties, and libraries and other financial support. The Criteria also called for expanding nonminority enrollment at HBCUs by offering on their campuses academic programs that are in high demand or unavailable at the state systems' other campuses. Efforts also were to be made to provide HBCUs with resources that would ultimately ensure they were at least comparable to those at traditionally white institutions having similar missions.

Under the plans accepted by OCR, HBCUs have aimed for desegregated student enrollments and better programs and facilities while retaining or enhancing their historic stature. OCR has monitored the plans to make sure they have been implemented.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF HBCUs*

Under the plans, substantial progress has been made by many states in desegregation of their state systems of higher

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**Information in this section is based on available data. However, some of the findings are based on older studies that do not fully reflect recent developments in higher education desegregation.*

education. At the same time, HBCUs continue to be a vital resource in the nation's educational system. Among their accomplishments are the following:

- *HBCUs have played an historical role in enhancing equal educational opportunity for all students.*

- *More than 80 percent of all black Americans who received degrees in medicine and dentistry were trained at the two traditionally black institutions of medicine and dentistry--Howard University and Meharry Medical College. (Today, these institutions still account for 19.7 percent of degrees awarded in medicine and dentistry to black students.)*

- *HBCUs have provided undergraduate training for three-fourths of all black persons holding a doctorate degree; three-fourths of all black officers in the armed forces; and four-fifths of all black federal judges.*

- *HBCUs are leading institutions in awarding baccalaureate degrees to black students in the life sciences, physical sciences, mathematics, and engineering.*

- *HBCUs continue to rank high in terms of the proportion of graduates who pursue and complete graduate and professional training.*

- *Fifty percent of black faculty in traditionally white research universities received their bachelor's degrees at an HBCU.*

HBCU graduates include: Mary McLeod Bethune, educator and founder of Bethune Cookman College; Charles Drew, physician and medical researcher; W.E.B. DuBois, sociologist, educator, and co-founder of the NAACP; Patricia Harris, former Secretary, U.S. Departments of Health, Education, and Welfare and Housing and Urban Development; Martin Luther King, Jr., recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize; Christa McAuliffe, first educator in space; Kenneth B. Clark, psychologist; Thurgood Marshall, Supreme Court Justice; Leontyne Price, world renowned opera soprano; Louis Sullivan, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and many black political leaders.

Today, there are 107 HBCUs with more than 228,000 students enrolled. Fifty-six institutions are under private control, and 51 are public colleges and universities. The public institutions account for more than two-thirds of the students in historically black institutions. Most (87) of the institutions are four-year colleges or universities, and 20 are two-year institutions. In the past, more than 80 percent of all black college graduates have been trained at these HBCUs. Today, HBCUs enroll 20 percent of black undergraduates. However, HBCUs award 40 percent of baccalaureate degrees earned by black college students.

WHITE HOUSE INITIATIVE ON HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

On April 28, 1989, President George Bush issued Executive Order 12677 to strengthen the capacity of HBCUs to provide quality education and to increase their participation in federally sponsored programs. It mandates the taking of positive measures, by federal agencies, to increase the participation of HBCUs, their faculty and students, in

federally sponsored programs. It also encourages the private sector to assist HBCUs. The Executive Order is administered by the Department's Office of Postsecondary Education - White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities. This office also coordinates the activities of 27 federal departments and agencies in implementing Executive Order 12677. These agencies were selected for participation in the program because they account for 98 percent of federal funds directed to our colleges and universities.

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, authorizes funds for enhancing HBCUs. The statute authorizes the "Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities Program" and the "Strengthening Historically Black Graduate Institutions Program." Title III is administered by the Department's Office of Postsecondary Education - Division of Institutional Development.

CONSIDERING AN HBCU

Selecting a college in which to enroll is a very personal choice. However, HBCUs offer a valuable option for minority and nonminority students alike. Some of the factors that make HBCUs attractive include:

- *Cost*

  Many HBCUs have lower tuition and fees compared to traditionally white institutions. A number also offer a broad spectrum of financial assistance to qualified students and have extensive experience in identifying sources of

financial support for deserving students. Financial assistance may come in the form of scholarships, loans, and grants to cover the cost of tuition, fees, room and board, books, supplies, personal expenses, and transportation.

- *Cultural and Racial Diversity*

  HBCUs often serve students from a wide range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Students interested in the humanities, or in such areas as sociology, psychology, economics, government, urban planning, etc., may find their exposure to a broader range of individuals and their cultures particularly valuable.

  Nonresident aliens constitute a large portion of the student enrollment at many HBCUs. A number of foreign students and professors at HBCUs participate in student or faculty exchange programs. In general, HBCUs aim to be sensitive to the needs of foreign students and provide students an opportunity to associate with different nationalities and to learn about cultural diversities. Multicultural exposures are expected to become increasingly valuable as the demographics of the American work force change and America competes more aggressively in the world economy.

  Today, many HBCUs have a racially diverse student enrollment at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Also, the majority of HBCUs continue to have a racially diverse faculty and administration. HBCUs

are presently more racially desegregated, with respect to their enrollment and staff, than traditionally white institutions.

- *Remediation and Retention*

HBCUs may offer a more supportive educational setting for students encountering some difficulty in realizing their full academic potential. HBCUs generally offer a broad range of effective remedial programs for students. Many HBCUs have established developmental centers, reading laboratories, and expanded tutorial and counseling services to accommodate the special needs of educationally disadvantaged students. In addition, a strong commitment by many HBCUs to serve all students has resulted in high rates of graduation.

- *Faculty Support*

Traditionally, the faculties at many HBCUs place as much, or more, emphasis on teaching and student service-oriented activities as on research. This permits more time for personal and high quality student-teacher interactions. In addition, many teachers at HBCUs have experience in working with minority students and students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Research findings indicate that these factors are important for the academic success of many minority students.

- *New Programs*

  As a result of the desegregation plans approved by OCR under Title VI, many state systems of higher education have placed new high demand programs and curricula--such as engineering, pharmacy, and computer science--at HBCUs.

Students considering options in postsecondary education are faced with one of the most difficult and important choices of their lives. Their decisions should lead to informed selections reflecting the broadest possible range of educational opportunities.

The Office for Civil Rights is committed to equality of opportunity in education. OCR conducts complaint investigations and compliance reviews to ensure Title VI requirements are being followed. Also, OCR supports the efforts to comply with Title VI by offering a program of technical assistance to institutions receiving federal funds as well as to beneficiaries of those funds. If you wish additional information about the OCR compliance program, you may write or phone the OCR regional office which serves your state or territory. The addresses and telephone numbers of the regional civil rights offices are listed below.

This pamphlet was developed in coordination with the Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education. If you wish additional information on Executive Order 12677, Title III, or programs on HBCUs, you may write to the Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202.

Region I

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

Office for Civil Rights, Region I
U.S. Department of Education
J.W. McCormack Post Office and
Courthouse, Room 222, 01-0061
Boston, MA 02109-4557
(617) 223-9662; TDD (617) 223-9695

Region II

New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

Office for Civil Rights, Region II
U.S. Department of Education
26 Federal Plaza, 33rd Floor
Room 33-130, 02-1010
New York, NY 10278-0082
(212) 264-4633; TDD (212) 264-9464

Region III

Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia

Office for Civil Rights, Region III
U.S. Department of Education
3535 Market Street, Room 6300, 03-2010
Philadelphia, PA 19104-3326
(215) 596-6772; TDD (215) 596-6794

Region IV

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee

Office for Civil Rights, Region IV
U.S. Department of Education
Post Office Box 2048, 04-3010
Atlanta, GA 30301-2048
(404) 331-2954; TDD (404) 331-7236

Region V

Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin

Office for Civil Rights, Region V
U.S. Department of Education
401 South State Street, Room 700C, 05-4010
Chicago, IL 60605-1202
(312) 886-3456; TDD (312) 353-2541

Region VI

Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas

Office for Civil Rights, Region VI
U.S. Department of Education
1200 Main Tower Building
Suite 2260, 06-5010
Dallas, TX 75202-9998
(214) 767-3959; TDD (214) 767-3936

Region VII

Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska

Office for Civil Rights, Region VII
U.S. Department of Education
10220 North Executive Hills Boulevard
8th Floor, 07-6010
Kansas City, MO 64153-1367
(816) 891-8026; TDD (816) 374-6461

Region VIII

Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming

Office for Civil Rights, Region VIII
U.S. Department of Education
Federal Office Building
1961 Stout Street, Room 342, 08-7010
Denver, CO 80294-3608
(303) 844-5695; TDD (303) 844-3417

Region IX

Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Guam, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, American Samoa

Office for Civil Rights, Region IX
U.S. Department of Education
Old Federal Building
50 United Nations Plaza, Room 239, 09-8010
San Francisco, CA 94102-4102
(415) 556-7000; TDD (415) 556-6806

Region X

Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington

Office for Civil Rights, Region X
U.S. Department of Education
915 Second Avenue, Room 3310, 10-9010
Seattle, WA 98174-1099
(206) 553-6811; TDD (206) 553-4542